

IOWAccess Project 10

Electronic Commerce Business Plan And User Workbook

Mission

Draft a business plan for Iowa to identify and analyze intergovernmental opportunities that implement electronic commerce; and write a guidebook which defines electronic commerce and encourages collaboration to meet the needs of government's global customers.



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Section 1 ■ Approach

Background

Enterprises around the world are finding that electronic commerce is setting new standards for customer access and convenience. Iowa governments are choosing to explore the use of electronic commerce to make government more accessible and efficient. Many federal, state and local government agencies have initiated electronic commerce projects already and are finding that the benefits can exceed the investments, and that the possibilities for intergovernmental electronic commerce applications are limited only by the imagination.

The purpose of the Electronic Commerce Business Plan and Guidebook is to describe a process by which intergovernmental electronic commerce applications can be identified, evaluated, implemented and evaluated. Processes in the Plan and the Guidebook emphasize interagency and intergovernmental collaboration in the development and implementation of electronic commerce applications. Use of the Plan and Guidebook by government organizations will result in effective management of intergovernmental electronic commerce ideas in Iowa.

Electronic Commerce is defined as " the exchange of information, goods and services over networks and the use of networks to supply and retrieve the information necessary to support these transactions."

The Project Team

Individuals involved in the creation of the Business Plan and Guidebook included individuals from federal, state and local government agencies, as well as individuals from banking, telecommunications, and economic development. These individuals represented both providers and constituents of government products, services, and regulations.

Product Development

The team drafted outlines of the Business Plan and Guidebook and researched companies with electronic commerce knowledge and experience. A Request of Proposals was drafted and published on the Internet, attracting many inquiries and several proposals. After evaluating the proposals, KPMG Peat Marwick was selected and the contractor to assist the team in development of the Business Plan and Guidebook.

As the documents evolved, the team relied more heavily on individuals representing Iowa Information Technology Services (ITS) in evaluating drafts of the document, since ITS had been identified early in the project as the organization ultimately responsible for implementing and updating the Business Plan and Guidebook.

Section 2 ■ Cost/Benefit Analysis

ITS has estimated the cost of maintaining and updating the plan and guidebook to approximate the cost of one-half position and support; that is about \$55,000 annually. It is evident from the benefits listed below that the benefits far exceed the costs if the Plan and Guidebooks are used by intergovernmental organizations.

- Improved application solutions delivery as a result of leveraged knowledge on specific applications experience
- More reliable project delivery as a result of the shared exchange of proven successful work plans and implementation procedures
- Enhanced opportunities for collaboration and joint development as the result of increased information sharing
- Improved vendor relations as a result of adopting performance requirements and planning methods
- Potential for improved funding as a result of adopting common methodologies and approaches
- Re-find focus of solution efforts on capabilities not platform specifics: a result of adopting standards and best practices.
- Increased longevity of application investments as a result of standards and common protocols.
- Simplified systems integration and interoperability as a result of standards and common protocols.
- Simplified access to new and legacy data due to adopting standard, well-defined interfaces.
- Simplified user access to data from multiple sources due to current technologies, which support interfaces to multiple back-end applications

All of these benefits relate directly to the long-term advancement of service improvement to State customers.

The IOWAccess *Seal of Approval* program will be developed by the Advisory Council and DP&S to recognize projects complying with this Plan. The certification process, criteria and administration will be defined and published by the Council.

In Addition, many projects can also realize the benefits of collaborative information-sharing without going through the formal “Seal of Approval” program. For example, federal agency projects can leverage standards, project guidelines and specific domain competencies.

Section 3 ■ Evaluation

The draft Business Plan and Guidebook and an evaluation survey was sent to individuals representing the following groups to determine if they are understandable and useful:

- Agencies and associations who participated in phone surveys during development of the Business Plan and Guidebook (both management and technical representatives)
- Intergovernmental decision makers with little or no knowledge of electronic commerce
- Other states identified by Iowa Interactive, the company providing the electronic gateway for Iowa intergovernmental electronic commerce applications
- Other IOWAccess teams whose projects relate to electronic commerce

The project team sought technical assistance in the development of the survey to make sure the results will accurately reflect the usefulness of the Business Plan and Guidebook. Respondents were given adequate time to complete the survey in order to “test” the Guidebook process on a potential electronic commerce application. Survey responses are due this month and the results will be compiled and submitted to ITS for consideration as they implement and update the Business Plan and Guidebook.

Section IV ■ Future Plans – Conclusions & Recommendations

Sustainability

The Project Team recommends that ITS adopt a process for updating the plan every six months or sooner depending upon circumstances. ITS, with the advice of the IOWAccess Advisory Council (Council) and the electronic commerce user group, should decide what data should be updated and how future efficiencies will be recognized and implemented. It is critical that ITS maintain and update the Business Plan and Guidebook to offer guidance to governmental organizations who recognize the value of intergovernmental electronic commerce.

The Project Team recommends that ITS adopt a process for regularly evaluating and updating the Business Plan and Guidebook. The process should include individuals representing all levels of government, companies who have successfully integrated electronic commerce into their business plans, and experts in technology and communications.

The electronic commerce user group suggested in the Business Plan can play a lead role in continuous improvement of the Business Plan and Guidebook. The user group can also help ITS develop a process for recruiting and using customer feedback as a tool to enhance customer service and streamlining government processes.

Intergovernmental & Citizen Focus

The Project Team recommends that ITS and the Council, with the assistance of the electronic commerce user group, develop a method for soliciting input from citizens and users. Information received from this solicitation should be reviewed and analyzed by ITS, the Council and the electronic commerce user group and a mechanism for feedback be developed.

Marketing/Public Awareness

The Business Plan and Guidebook provides a place/process for people to learn more about how to maximize opportunities to conduct business electronically. The Business Plan and Guidebook “customer” includes a broad audience, including government entities (federal, state and local government agencies), businesses, and citizens. Our “customers” will rely on the Business Plan and Guidebook to develop methods that deliver products and services more efficiently.

As the Business Plan and Guidebook evolve, it will provide a source of development standards for its “customers”, allowing for organized solutions to implementation of electronic commerce applications throughout the state. The benefits of this Business Plan and Guidebook

to its “customers” are guidance, process and order.

The Business Plan and Guidebook’s strengths include: the structure of a cross-section of participation in the plan’s development; its ability to be a single-source for planning; the pool of resources; and its voluntary participation. The fact that projects are already developed without guidance from a standard will affect the Business Plan and Guidebook’s effectiveness.

The biggest marketing opportunity for the Business Plan and Guidebook will be with the citizens of Iowa and their representative leaders. Through publication on the Iowa web site, distribution through the Federal Executive Council, association communications, inclusion in government leadership press conferences, and ITS’ communication and cooperation with state agencies, the Business Plan and Guidebook will become a tool used to develop more accessible and efficient delivery of government services.

Marketing obstacles are recognized because of a lack of connectivity between government levels and agencies, changes in government administrations, issues of security and privacy, policy decisions, and the battles of project ownership/responsibility.

Using intergovernmental organizations will increase awareness of the Plan and Guidebook. These organizations such as ISCA, League of Cities, and School Board Association can also help train public service professionals how to use the documents most efficiently.

The marketing plan for the Business Plan and Guidebook will include a short, descriptive brochure about the benefits and availability of the Business Plan and Guidebook.